

Texas WHCoA Solutions Forum
Austin, Texas, July 29, 2005
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Aging Texas Well

I. Introduction

- A. Good morning, it is an honor to be asked by my good friend Chris Kyker to talk about Aging Texas Well. If ever there was anyone that exemplifies what I am going to discuss, it is Chris.
- B. I must also say it is a bit intimidating to be on a panel dealing with health and have to precede Mr. Carrozza and Dr. Sanchez. By the way, those that are paying attention close attention to the slides will see a reference to both of them. I am not as qualified to discuss health as these gentleman, so I am going to direct my remarks to a slightly broader topic of long-term living, specifically our Aging Texas Well initiative. I want to briefly do three things:
 - 1. Discuss the origins and theory behind Aging Texas Well
 - 2. Discuss what is and how it works
 - 3. And discuss implications or recommendations for the delegates at the WHCOA to consider.

II. Nascent Movement

- A. In response to the longevity revolution of the 20th century, gerontologists began re-thinking what it means to grow old. As these slides show, a number of names, concepts and approaches have been put forward to re-define aging.
- B. Theory is nice, but the response to the longevity revolution has also taken on a new grass-roots movement around some of these ideas.

This slide shows some of the names of the movement. The common denominator in all of these is community.

- C. The purpose of Aging Texas Well is to translate ivory tower rhetoric into rubber meets the road reality in communities across Texas.

III. Aging Texas Well is....

A. Now I want to explain what Aging Texas Well is and how it works

B. This slide shows the definition of Aging Texas Well. Three elements are important:

1. First, it is focused on individuals taking responsibility to prepare for aging and on communities supporting that preparation
2. Second, it views aging wellness from a holistic perspective.
3. Third, it recognizes that a lifespan approach is vital to success.

C. This slide further illustrates what ATW is about.

1. First, note that it is a sunrise representing opportunity
2. At the top – in white -- are 6 areas of individual focus. Physical, mental and spiritual health and social engagement are the four pillars of individual well-being. The importance of financial and legal preparedness are self-evident.
3. The areas of individual focus are supported by 8 critical aspects of social infrastructure, most of which are specifically identified in the Declaration of Objectives of the Older Americans Act.

D. This rather complicated slide explains how the different aspects of Aging Texas Well work together. Let me briefly explain it, moving from top to bottom:

1. The top corners contain boxes with the federal and state mandates that drive the initiative. The Older Americans Act is

critical because it established the holistic framework, established SUAs and AAAs as aging advocates, and most importantly provided the funding for the initiative.

2. In Texas, we have legislative and gubernatorial support of the initiative.
3. Moving to the middle top of the diagram, you can see we have a vision statement that defines outcomes and we have collected benchmark data through scientific survey to measure outcomes
4. An Aging Texas Well Advisory Committee meets on a regular basis.
5. In the very center of the diagram, we see that policy and program analysis is the centerpiece of our efforts. This is summarized periodically in the *State of our State on Aging* report and in special publications.
6. This analysis drives efforts to ensure that state policy is responsive to the needs of older Texans.
7. It also drives efforts to work with local communities to build capacity.
8. Finally, the result will be improved outcomes in the lives of older Texans as measured by the benchmarks.

IV. Based on our experience, there are several implications and recommendations that the WHCOA should consider related to Aging Texas Well.

A. First, preparing for an aging society is the responsibility of individuals, of communities and of states.

1. For example, the first area we focused on in Aging Texas Well was physical health. Out of this focus, we developed the Texercise

Program, which was awarded an Innovators Award by the International Council on Active Aging last year.

2. Another example: I have meetings over the next month with organizations as diverse as the Texas Higher Coordinating Board and the Tyler Chamber of Commerce to discuss how Aging Texas Well applies to them.

- B. Second, preparing for an aging society requires integrating multiple disciplines** including: research and analysis, planning, technical assistance and training, public information, and marketing. Furthermore, it must involve all sectors of society. A keystone of Aging Texas Well is the development of public-private partnerships. This slide shows just a few of the organizations that we have sustainable, ongoing working partnerships with.
- C. Third, preparing for an aging society requires adoption of the rhetoric and model by the aging network in planning and local advocacy efforts.** For example, we funded a series of Aging Texas planning grants across Texas and area agencies use the ATW framework for many things. Additionally, we have also developed a local community assessment tool.
- D. Fourth, every state and community can and should implement something like Aging Texas Well.** The federal authority and the funding source exist in the Older Americans Act. Having a concurrent resolution, statutory language and executive order in Texas greatly increases our credibility in working with public and private sector organizations. It would probably be more helpful to have the concept of planning for the future more explicitly outlined in the Older Americans Act as both the National Association of Area Agencies on

Aging and the National Association of State Units on Aging have recommended.

- E. Thank you for the opportunity to explain Aging Texas Well. Please go to www.agingtexaswell.org for more information and to see the community assessment tool.